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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Israeli operation in Lebanon
(7/28-30)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported that Secretary General of Hizbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, stressed in a televised speech on al-Manar TV station that Israel has failed to achieve anything militarily so far in its 18-day aggression on Lebanon, and that Israel has received very tough blows. He added that Hizbollah is keen about national unity and solidarity in Lebanon, calling on his countrymen to be patient and steadfast. Nasrallah said "we are at an historical opportunity in Lebanon to liberate land and to restore Lebanese prisoners; victory of the Lebanese resistance in this battle is a victory for all Lebanese and Arabs and all resistance men. The victory of the Lebanese resistance is a victory for all honest Arabs, Moslems and Christians." He also praised Syria for hosting tens of thousands of Lebanese evacuees who were forced out of their homes by the continued Israeli aggression against Lebanese civilians and infrastructure. Nasrallah said that the resistance would target many Israeli cities in the 'beyond-Haifa stage' unless Israel stops its barbaric aggression on Lebanon.

Syrian papers also reported that Israeli warplanes launched a series of raids against the Beirut-Damascus road near the border point of Al-Masna. A SANA report said that: "Israeli artillery bombarded the peripheries of Rashaya al-Fakhar and Halta Farm, Kafr Hamam, and Birkat Shab'a for two hours while military planes flew over many villages in the Hasbaya region dropping leaflets warning citizens against cooperating with the Lebanese Resistance."

Papers also reported a statement by Information Minister Muhsin Bilal in an interview broadcast by channel two of German ZDF television Thursday night, highlights of which were carried by SANA. Dr Bilal denied that weapons are sent from Iran to Hizballah via Syria. He stressed that Syria supports the Lebanese and Palestinian national resistance against the Israeli occupation. Minister Bilal said that "Syria is offering every possible aid to the Lebanese brothers to help them overcome the horrible consequences of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon. "Syrians and Lebanese are one family and will not allow themselves to be separated by anyone." "Those who propose deployment of an international force on the Lebanese-Syrian border forget the fraternal relationship between the two

sisterly countries," he said. "No Syrian or Lebanese will accept this," he added.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Hizbollah Leader Nasrallah: Israel seeks to achieve in politics what it has failed to achieve in war.... Victory is presented to all Lebanese and honest Arabs.... The shelling al-Afoula settlement is a start for the new beyond-Haifa stage. Over 13 Israeli soldiers injured in attacks in Maroun al-Raas and 19 Israeli settlers wounded in shelling of Israeli settlements. Israeli massacres increase amid new American pressures" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/30)

"America dispatches more military equipment to Israel. Rice discusses formation of international forces" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/30)

"The second defeat: The Israeli army withdraws from the south following huge losses. Lebanese national resistance for the first time uses the 'Khaybar 1' missile system in the battle. A speedy US-British move to contain the situation and to make Lebanon join the New Middle East. Lebanese intelligence arrests a large number of Mossad networks in South Lebanon, some of whom previously served in the Lahd army" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/29)

"Foreign Minister Mouallem reviews international efforts to reach a ceasefire in Lebanon with Norwegian envoy" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/28)

"Syrian Information Minister Bilal: Syrians and Lebanese are one family; they will allow no international power to separate them" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/29)

"Demonstrations expand internationally condemning Israeli

aggression against Lebanon. The Moslem brotherhood in Egypt condemns attempts to sow seeds of sedition that had, previously, exhausted the nation's body and mind. Islamic scholar Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhawi stresses backing of the resistance" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/29)

"Israel confesses painful blows. Israel abandons field confrontations in favor of air escalation. An Israeli officer: Hizbollah eradicated the spearhead unit in the Goulani Brigade. 14 Israeli soldiers injured in a resistance operation at Maroun al-Raas. Peres and Halloutz: Grave losses inflicted upon our forces" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/28)

"Hizbollah officials to Al-Thawra: We are ready to respond to Israel's scorched-earth policy" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/28)

"14 Palestinians martyred, eight injured in Gaza and Jennin by Israeli occupation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/28)

"30 Palestinians martyred in three days of Israeli aggressions. Occupation forces destroy Palestinian houses on the pretext of tunnels" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/29)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Least That Can Be Done"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/29): "The UN Security Council was content to express shock at the crime that the occupation army committed when it bombed a position of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon UNIFIL, killing four soldiers.

"The Council did not dare to condemn Israel. In other words, the United States did not allow the Council to issue such a condemnation. Thus, the international cover was removed, not only from Lebanon and the Palestinian people, but also from forces that supposedly serve as peacekeepers. Those forces were

sent to Lebanon by an organization that could not defend them even with an expression of condemnation.

"If the Security Council was prevented from condemning the killer of the forces that it sent to Lebanon, how could we expect this esteemed Council to condemn the same killer for the massacres it is perpetrating against the people of Lebanon?

"The message here is clear: The United Nations must get out of the game of death and fire that Israel is playing in Lebanon so that no international witnesses will remain there to write diaries about Israel's terrorism. UNIFIL's mission must also end so that the region up to the Litani and Al-Awwali rivers in southern Lebanon will be cleared to pave the way for the scorched-earth plan that Israel is preparing to implement under the pretext of crushing the resistance, and also to pave the way for the deployment of the international force that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is proposing, and which she imposed on the Rome conference. That international force will occupy south Lebanon and will be assigned the mission of annihilating the Lebanese national resistance on behalf of Israel. We should not forget that the current proposal says that this force should be made up of NATO troops.

"The international organization lost its role, or delegated it to the US Administration. Or perhaps this administration robbed the United Nations of this role, rendering it unable to perform its mission in accordance with its Charter.

"Has anyone noticed that in the press conference that was held at the end of the Rome conference, a journalist asked UN Secretary General Kofi Annan a question but got the answer from

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Rice, who did not allow the UN chief to answer...?

"The Secret Agenda"

Ahmad Hamadah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (7/28): "US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's talk about a new Middle East shows the hidden agenda of the brutal Israeli aggression against Lebanon....

"The American position shows that the Israeli attacks against Lebanon were not a reaction to Hizbollah's capture of the two Israeli soldiers, but rather an effort to serve the strategic interests of Israel and the United States at the expense of the peoples of the region and their rights....

"The failure of the American and Israeli policies over the past months to impose their vision on Lebanon made Washington and Tel Aviv turn to the military option to achieve what they failed to achieve through diplomacy.

"The objective of the new Middle East plan is to integrate the Israeli entity into the Arab and Islamic region after abolishing the region's identity and culture and fragmenting it into feeble ethnic and sectarian entities so that Tel Aviv will emerge as the only master of this region and the main controller of its resources and capabilities.

"However this plan will not succeed. Events in Iraq serve as proof, and here is Lebanon proving the failure of this dangerous plan, thanks to the steadfastness of the Resistance and its ability to reshuffle cards and upset equations...."

"Futile Questions"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/28): "The world agrees almost unanimously that the outcome of

the Rome conference and the failure of the Security Council to condemn Israel represented a green light for Israel to continue its aggression against Lebanon....

"Perhaps it is difficult for anyone in the world to understand the logic that drives the US Administration to add fuel to the fire, and perhaps it is more difficult to see this logic obstruct the international will. But this is the bitter reality in this American age....

"The world should ask Washington where it wants to lead it, for how long it will continue to practice political debauchery, and why it refuses to learn from its failures in Afghanistan and Iraq....

"But it might be futile to ask these questions, because Washington deals with the world disdainfully, supports the continuation of the killing and destruction unashamedly, and uses all the tools of pressure, hegemony, and blackmail to drag the world behind it toward the swamps of wars...."

"At the Climax of Challenge and Confrontation"

Samir al-Shibani, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/29): "The steadfastness that the valiant resistance men showed in Marun al-Raas, Bint Jubayl, and Aytarun was not only a surprise for the enemy, but it also shocked the enemy's elite military troops, who suffered heavy human and material losses....

"The steadfastness of the resistance came also as a shock for the Arab and international silence, which hides evil objectives and satanic dreams.... It has become quite obvious that defeating the Arab nation Umma is not only a US-Israeli goal but also a goal for some false Arabs...."

"The Option of Victory"

Samira Al-Maslme, an editorialist in independent weekly Al-Iqtissadiya, wrote (7/23): "The time will come when the facts will be divulged about the Israeli aggression, about those Lebanese who stand behind it and about those who secretly called for continuing the aggression while they claimed in several world capitals that they endeavored to stop this aggression against their country.

"Those few Lebanese seem really afraid of Hizbollah's real victory, which will expose them in front of Lebanese and Arabs. They really hope this will not happen. Some of them are making efforts to defeat Hizbollah. But to those Lebanese we say: Conspiring like bats in the dark, in secret and behind-the-scenes sessions in some Arab, American and European capitals, will be useless. Those who have fallen will be doomed to failure. The age of secret conspiring against the Arab nation is over. There are two obvious parts of the picture now One is drawn by the resistance, and the other by the remnants of official Arab regime, whose tails are Israeli agents in Lebanon who serve Israel's interests, like Marwan Hamadeh former Lebanese Minister and current MP and the retired, defeated resistor Elias Atallah, who, in the words of the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, are true friends of Israel...."

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